

ON THE NET

Foreign Language Teachers' Greatest Hits

Jean W. LeLoup

SUNY Cortland

Robert Ponterio

SUNY Cortland

INTRODUCTION

The World Wide Web is very much a part of many people's everyday lives now, whether it be for personal or professional reasons. The Foreign Language Teaching Forum (FLTEACH) was inaugurated in February of 1994 to provide a forum where foreign language (FL) educators could engage in collegial dialog about work issues on a regular basis. A great deal of sharing occurs on this forum, and the subscribership is very generous with its knowledge, expertise, and experience.

On February 21, 2005, and again on June 1, 2006, the moderators of FLTEACH—also the authors of this column—issued a request to the membership of FLTEACH. Our request:

We think it would be interesting to ask FLTEACHERs to share their absolute, number one, top of the line, favorite and most useful web site for you as a language teacher. If you have trouble deciding which is best, let us know which ones come in a close second or third. We're interested in seeing what kinds of categories of web sites are most useful for FL teachers these days, so if there are a few different types that help you in your work, that provide great authentic materials that you work with, or serve an important purpose that we haven't thought of, we would love to hear about it.

We were interested in gathering the addresses or URLs of what the subscribers/contributors considered to be their "top web sites." In other words, what sites were indispensable to these FL professionals; what sites did they use regularly? This information could obviously be of use and benefit to others.

From this quick survey request, we received some 60+ submissions, and several were duplicates. We will not attempt to replicate the entire list here, but we would like to mention a few sites of varying categories with a brief explanation and/or description of them. In this way, we hope to give the reader a jump start in the exploration of what FL teachers (at least those on FLTEACH) find to be the "greatest hits" of the web.

GOOGLE

Web address: <http://www.google.com/>



Google, including international versions, wins hands-down for the number of recommendations. It is truly flattening the world (Friedman, 2005). Google most likely needs no explanation, but this search engine has an advanced search feature that is worth noting and especially FL friendly. You can request results in more than 30 languages! Other advanced feature requests include file format, date, numeric range, domain, and synonyms to name a few.

Below is an example of how one FLTEACHER uses the advanced search options on Google:

My favorite website is Google.com--Advanced Search. You can click on Google in various languages to verify words, grammatical constructions, cultural items, etc. For example, if you want to know if "Que pena que...." is followed by the subjunctive in Portuguese, simply go to Advanced Search, choose Portuguese from the language menu, set the hits to "100" and type "Que pena que" in the box "exact phrase". You will then come up with a whole series of sentences with "Que pena que..." and you can quickly see different verbs that complete this thought.

James May

February 22, 2005

Google [Advanced Search](#) [Advanced Search Tips](#) | [About Google](#)

Find results with **all** of the words 10 results

with the **exact phrase**

with **at least one** of the words

without the words

Language Return pages written in

File Format return results of the file format

Date Return web pages updated in the

Numeric Range Return web pages containing numbers between and

Occurrences Return results where my terms occur

Domain return results from the site or domain e.g. google.com, .org [More info](#)

Usage Rights Return results that are [More info](#)

SafeSearch ☒ No filtering ☐ Filter using [SafeSearch](#)

Page-Specific Search

Similar Find pages similar to the page e.g. www.google.com/help.html

Links Find pages that link to the page

For the classroom teacher, Google image searches are a great source of authentic cultural materials including works of art, foreign buildings, street scenes, and people engaged in all sorts of routine practices of daily life. With so much now available online, it sometimes seems like you can google anything. Just don't forget that web page authors can make mistakes.

EMBASSY OF SPAIN PUBLICATIONS

The Embassy of Spain has two sites that received high accolades. One is the online magazine *Materiales*, available in digital format since May 1997: <http://www.sgci.mec.es/usa/materiales/>



This magazine is a teaching resource based on the national standards for FL learning (Standards, 1999). The lesson units all deal with Spanish culture in some way and are elaborated at the elementary, intermediate, or advanced level. Each issue of *Materiales* has several lessons at different levels.

The second publication of the Embassy of Spain is the online magazine *Tecla*. This resource has been available since September 1994: <http://www.sgci.mec.es/uk/Pub/tecla.html>



Tecla is published every Friday of the academic year in the United Kingdom. A typical issue contains two to three authentic texts about Spanish culture, along with comprehension and production activities. Answer keys, where appropriate, are also provided.

QUIA.COM

Web address: <http://quia.com/>



Quia is a site where teachers can create materials tailored to their own curriculum, including a wide variety of online activities, quizzes, and other assessment tools. Templates are provided for both activity and quiz creation. Grading tools are also available. Originally, Quia provided all these services for free. While it is now charging a nominal yearly fee, teachers who use it think it is well worth the cost and sometimes can even get their school district to subsidize the subscription.

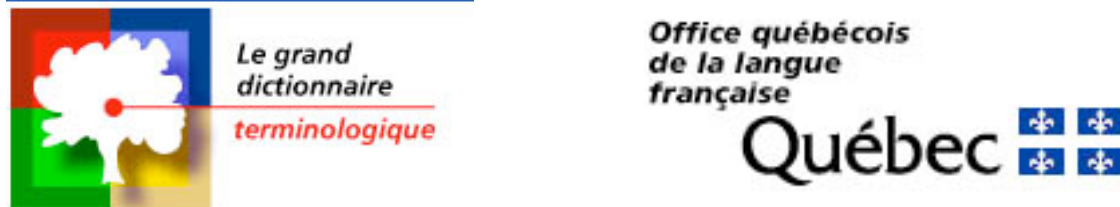
I'm sure someone else has surely already mentioned Quia? I've used it for as long as I've been a member of FLTEACH, 7 years. Even when I couldn't get my students to the lab after the fire, I was able to use the quizzes I could create on Quia by printing them out.

Mary Ann Freeman

June 13, 2006

LE GRAND DICTIONNAIRE

Web address: <http://www.granddictionnaire.com/>



Dictionaries are clearly an essential tool in the FL classroom, and not just for students. Keeping up with new vocabulary or tracking down a word that just isn't in one of the hard copy or electronic dictionaries in the classroom would be much more difficult without access to up-to-date online tools. The *grand dictionnaire terminologique* by the Office Québécoise de la Langue Française is a great online dictionary for a quick search for an equivalent term in French or English.

1. Recherche

Langue d'interrogation	Langue de l'équivalent
anglais ▼	français ▼
Interrogation	
<input type="text"/>  	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> par terme <input type="radio"/> dans la définition	

I sure use www.granddictionnaire.com a lot, to look up French words I don't know. For example, someone today wanted to know how to say "kickball"....and it's there ("le kickball" by the way.) Way better than the Langenscheidt dictionaries in my classroom.

Deb Blaz, FLTEACHER

February 21, 2005

Paper dictionaries, both bilingual and monolingual, still have their place, as do some of the excellent electronic dictionaries such as the *Petit Robert*, the *Petit Larousse*, the *Grand Dictionnaire Hachette-Oxford*, or the *Grand Robert & Collins électronique*, that offer a variety of interesting features and examples of usage.

DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

Web address: <http://www.edstandards.org/Standards.html>



As well as being classroom teachers, many members of FLTEACH are involved in FL teacher education. As such, they need to be up-to-date on the national FL standards as well as state standards for Languages Other Than English (LOTE). Because we have a mobile society and our students will quite possibly go to teach in another geographic region, it behooves FL methods instructors to have access to the FL standards of all states, not merely the one in which they teach. This site provides links to all state education

departments as well as state educational standards for core subjects. Yes, foreign language is finally considered a core subject – at least at the national level!

After [eBay and Google], the SED [State Education Department] website, and, of course, FLTEACH, I think the Educational Standards site is the one I often start with.

Bill Heller

Mon, 21 Feb 2005

FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Web address: <http://www.specialeducationalneeds.com/>



In a special reference category, the MS Word document provided at:

<http://www.specialeducationalneeds.com/mfl/biblio.doc>

is perhaps the most complete bibliography of online and print references dealing with modern foreign languages and special educational needs. This impressive work contains nearly 1400 references, many online and some in languages other than English. A table of contents directs the reader to references on a particular special needs area.

It can be an effective tool, I've found, when responding to those who still argue that foreign language learning is, or should be, the preserve of an academic élite.

David Wilson (author of the site)

Harton School, South Shields, UK

CONCLUSION

Many other sites were submitted that are not mentioned above. Many contained multimedia formats, links to radio and TV programs for listening comprehension, and PowerPoint presentations in various languages put together by dedicated FL educators who are generous with their expertise and time. Still others were generic sites providing assistance in creating rubrics, lesson plans, and assessment tools for educators in general. Each and every web user surely has a list of "greatest hits." We hope the sites mentioned above will give the reader a jumpstart to either some new places or some new uses of familiar ground.

REFERENCES

Friedman, T. L. (2005). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century. (1999). Lawrence, KS: Allen Press, Inc.